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OUTLOOK NOTES

THE readers of the SCHOOL REVIEW do not need to be informed that there is now in progress an earnest movement for bettering the evils connected with entrance requirements to colleges. The difficulties in the way of accomplishing anything in this direction have been so great that up to within the past two years educators have yielded to a feeling of impotency and allowed matters to drift along, not indeed without occasional vigorous protest but without any organized attempt at improvement. The appointment of the joint committee of the Department of Higher Education and the Department of Secondary Education at the meeting of the National Educational Association in Denver in 1895 proved the beginning of a greater movement than was at that time anticipated. The committee has found the educational public ready for action. How great the general interest is is sufficiently indicated by the importance given this topic in the various educational gatherings of national significance. During the present year the three great associations of colleges and preparatory schools in the East, the Middle States, and the Northwest have made this topic practically the only one for consideration at their annual meetings. The national committee has, moreover, been successful in enlisting the services of great bodies of specialists in the several departments in a way that more than meets its highest expectations. The American Philological Association has appointed a committee at the request of the National Committee on College Entrance Requirements to report upon the subject of college entrance requirements and courses of study in Latin and Greek; the Department of Science of the National Association is working upon the courses of study in science; in December the Modern Language Association of America voted at its annual meet-

ing to appoint a committee of twelve to investigate for the subjects of French and German along the lines laid out by the national committee, and, moreover, voted the sum of \$100 for the necessary expenses of such an investigation; the American Historical Association is coöperating in regard to history; thus the best, most scholarly, and most conservative bodies in the country are all engaged, in a businesslike way, in attacking this problem.

On the surface, the difficulties seem to be innumerable, in reality, the fundamental difficulties are few. These innumerable surface difficulties are insuperable obstacles. They cannot be removed. There are so many conflicting interests that a harmonious compromise is undoubtedly out of the question. The appalling evils that now attend the articulation of our secondary and higher education are not to be removed by a little change here and a little change there. The fundamental problems must first be grappled with. The national committee and its associates in these various bodies must, in their final report, if it is to be of permanent value and to contribute to the development of education, face more squarely than anyone yet has done the problem of the twentieth century. We have outgrown our old clothes. It is time to stop patching them and letting them out and get a new suit that fits. It is time to recognize fully, squarely, once and for all, the adjustments forced upon education by the economic, social, and scientific developments of the last half century.

Some there are who gravely wag their heads, or smile derisively, when the question of uniform entrance requirements is broached. Others declare that uniformity is undesirable; that each college or university ought to preserve its individuality. A sufficient answer to this is that the individuality of no institution, of no soulless corporation is worth a farthing if, in preserving it, we must crush out the individualities of men and women. And yet, uniformity is not only impossible but it is undesirable,

not for the sake of the institutions but for the sake of individuals. How are we going to fit students for four or five different courses in four hundred or five hundred different institutions?—that is the problem which confronts the secondary teacher. The secondary curriculum is crowded and there are constant demands, some of them righteous demands, too, for the introduction of new subjects of practical and social importance. The high schools, particularly, are ground between the upper millstone of college requirements and the nether millstone of the practical demands of the great public. Some years ago the natural sciences were knocking imperiously at the high school door demanding admission. They were the new studies then. They got in. Since that day there has grown up another group of studies which might be called the social sciences, and they too are knocking for admission. They are beginning to edge their way in. Their claim for admission is quite as good as that of the natural sciences, possibly better, but the sufficient answer is that there is no room.

These conflicting demands have brought on a lively discussion as to relative educational values. Is Latin better than Greek, or Greek better than French, or French better than mediæval history, or mediæval history better than solid geometry, or solid geometry better than botany, or botany better than civil government, or civil government better than physics? To what extent is each good and why? The discussions of these problems are interesting dialectical diversions, but in listening to them and hearing them one cannot help wondering now and then whether he has not stumbled into a gathering of the old school men on the banks of the Styx. Their problem as to how many angels could dance at the same time on the point of a needle seems intensely practical and valuable in comparison with some of the discussions of educational values.

The intellectual world is now too broad for uniformity in the narrow sense, as it is too broad for anything else than uniformity

in the wide and comprehensive sense. Obviously the ideal must be that every school shall be able to fit any pupil for anything. The educational value of any given subject depends, of course, upon a given pupil and a given aim, and it also depends upon the method by which and the extent to which it is taught. These latter are determinate quantities. It is perfectly possible for school men to come together and decide how much of a given subject ought to be taught, fully recognizing the fact that to many pupils it ought not to be taught at all, but that, when taught, it should be taught so as to be of real value.

Without further preliminary I will state somewhat dogmatically certain fundamental principles upon the recognition of which it seems to me the successful termination of the present agitation wholly depends. These are: First, the absolute abandonment by colleges and universities of the theory that any subjects are indispensable for admission, unless it be the one subject of English. Second, the introduction into the secondary schools, as well as into colleges and universities, of the group system of electives and the entire abolition of courses of study. So long as we have the school curriculum represented by one system of mechanical puzzles and the college curriculum represented by another set of mechanical puzzles, the task of making them meet will remain impossible. The adoption of these two principles removes the difficulties without introducing any confusion into our educational system. It does not mean the abandonment of Latin. It means that Latin would still be required for certain groups of studies in college or university, and that, therefore, students with certain aims would take Latin even more certainly and enthusiastically than they do now. It does not mean the abandonment of sciences, but means rather the full recognition of sciences; the recognition of the fact that for many students science may be of far greater importance than language or history. It does mean a great deal more attention in all schools to the problem of the individual rather than to the

problem of the mass. It means the planning of individual courses of study from the beginning of the high school with much care and forethought, with the knowledge that if certain studies are to be pursued later in the college or university the requisite preliminaries must be taken in the academy or high school. It means, probably, more personal consultation with pupils on the part of principals.

In carrying out this programme it would be perfectly feasible, and indeed highly desirable, that there should be a general agreement as to the minimum entrance requirement. This minimum entrance requirement might be so low, and indeed probably should be so low, that every institution which ten years from now should have the legal right to the name of college, could require it. That it should include a certain amount of mathematics, a certain amount of English, and a certain amount of one other language, probably all would agree. It would be practicable, furthermore, and desirable, and indispensable even, that an agreement should be reached as to just how much and what Latin, Greek, science, history, French, German, psychology, political economy, and so on, should be studied if it were to be offered as a college entrance requirement. It would be practicable to attain a general consensus of opinion as to what studies should be considered indispensable preliminaries to certain higher studies. These things, once agreed upon and settled, it would not be difficult for a principal to mark out a course of study for each individual student which should avoid the scrapiness that is far too general and characteristic at present, and would at the same time tend to fit that special pupil in a high degree for the specific aim and purpose he had in view. The argument against this is, of course, that it means "premature specialization." But just what does "premature specialization" mean? And does it mean today what it meant yesterday?

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